

Very good collection!
You do not always indicate how
the plant is used, i.e., drunk, to
put on, to wash with etc. Otherwise
fine. Give me a copy of paper if
you have an extra one.

An Anthology of
The Aruban Peoples' Medicinal
Use of Plants.

A.

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Methods and Theory.
Prof. Malefijt

INTRODUCTION

Through interviewing a segment of the Aruban people, I have gathered information about the Aruban's medicinal uses of plants. All my informants were Arubans, in that they were born there, as were their parents, going back at least one generation. My best informants were old women, since they knew the most about these plants and used them whenever the occasion arose. These people also comprised a crosssection of the island, with the only exception being the Noord area. This area was deleted because neither my interpreter nor I were able to get any contacts in that area, and time was running short. I must also take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Joan Coronel, who acted as my interpreter; without her help this paper would have been an impossible task, since all but one of my informants did not speak English, and I do not speak Spanish.

Wherever possible I included the scientific names of the plants cited. Most of the time, however, this was impossible because (a) my specimen had died; (b) the descriptions of the plants which I did not have were in Dutch, since these were the only books available in the Oranjestad library; and (c) most of the books I had didn't contain pictures of the specimen I had collected.

Aloe (Aloe vera)L. is a plant with thick leaves which are very sappy. I was told that when the leaves of the plant are sheathed, and the center of the plant is cut out into small pieces which are boiled in water, the liquid obtained is good for the relief of chest colds, chest pains, headaches, head colds and as a laxative. The plant can also be used to relieve a backache when the inside of the leaf is backed and cooled and then it is tied on the patient's back with three strings. The aloe is usually taken in the form of pills which are made by cutting the aloe into very small pieces and then adding flour until small lumps are formed. When these pills are taken with water, they relieve the pain caused by bumps and blows. When the skin of the aloe is peeled off, and the insides washed seven times, and then it is cut into small pieces, and three are eaten, the respiratory tract of the individual is "cleaned out". Aloe was once used commercially in whitewashes and in makeup bases.

Betonica (Melochia tomentosa)L. When boiled water is poured over the purple flowers of this plant, and the liquid is steeped and then drunk as often as desired, it relieves "Thick blood". This term is used to describe a condition when during menstruation, the blood appears almost black and in clumps. The root is sheathed and the white inside is mashed and boiled, the syrup obtained is used for the relief of coughs and colds. When a leaf of this plant is rolled up and placed in the nostrils, it induces sneezing and relieves congestion.

Calabas (Crescentia cujete)L. is a tree which bears green spherical fruits. When these fruits are approximately six inches in diameter, they are mashed until an oil-like substance is obtained; the product is used as a cough syrup. When the outsides of this fruit are dried and varnished, due to the construction of the fruit, a bowl may be made which is water tight.

Flora de sanga (Hyptis suaveolens)Poit. When the berries of this plant are steeped in boiling water, the tea formed will relieve the condition of thick blood, which was previously described..

Rabu di cabai (Tournefortia bolubilis)L. The liquid obtained when this plant is boiled will relieve rheumatism, high blood pressure, and any internal pain. Three cups of this same preparation should be drunk for three days (total of nine cups), after pregnancy, for "cleaning out" the system.

Maisha grande shimaron (Gommalina virginica)L. When this plant is ground up and the powder is added to water, the liquid obtained is used to prevent a diabetic condition from getting any worse. The liquid may be taken as often as desired. When boiling water is poured over the plant the liquid, when cooled, can be used to relieve trouble with the bladder.

Petersali (Bidens bipinnatos)L. When a baby is about two weeks old, and has urinary trouble, which is evident from its crying continuously, the tea obtained from pouring boiling water over this plant, will relieve the pain when the baby is given a few teaspoons a day.

Ratanero (Gliricidia sepium)L. When three leaves are added to a lot of water and the solution is boiled for ten min-

How? drinking it? washing with it?

utes, the solution relieves fever and colds. This same solution also relieves sores or rashes on the body of a small child. When boiling water is poured over the leaves, and the liquid is cooled, and may be used to bath children. This same cool solution will abort pimples and ache when applied to the face three times a day.

Malohi (Andropogon schoenanthus)L. To relieve stomach cramps, the plant is boiled in a small amount of water, and the tea obtained is drunk one cup at a time, three times a day before meals. To relieve the aches and pains accompanying influenza and colds, lime juice is added to the above recipe and one cup is drunk hot at night.

Marenga - the seed of this plant is ground up and the powder obtained is applied to the scalp dry skin. This preparation will lubricate the skin and should be applied until the skin has a normal consistency. The oil obtained from the grinding of the seeds, is used to make warts and corns disappear.

Tamarijn (Tamarindus indica)L. When the leaves of this plant are boiled and lime juice is added to the mixture, the solution obtained is used for the relief of a cold or fever and is also used as a laxative. When three green tamarindos are added to a solution of epsom salts, sugar, rhubarb, and water, and the solution is mixed and allowed to stand outside overnight, the obtained liquid will relieve the little white dots which are similar to pimples which appear on the nape of the neck and on the back of the individual who suffers from an acute pigmentation deficiency. A laxative which should taste like Pepsi-cola is obtained when three green tamarindos are seasoned with cinible,

rhubarb, anise, nutmeg, orange peel, cinnamon and sugar, and the solution is allowed to stand outside in a covered pot - overnight.

Coneomacho - When one pound of sugar, one gallon and one pint of water are boiled with one tamaridos, seven coneomacho twigs, rhubarb, three betonica leaves, three coccolodi leaves, seven sangura leaves, nutmeg, anise, cinnamon, respectively, and the liquid is boiled for five minutes and strained, and then when it is boiled again the oil from the calabas is added and seven small pieces of sheathed aloe, which are washed seven times, are added to this brew, the solution is boiled for five minutes again and when cooled, a cough syrup is obtained.

Sangura (Leonotis nepetaefolia)L. When eight inches of dried sangura sticks are boiled in one pint of water, and sugar is added, when the solution is boiled down to one-half pint, and drunk in two parts, it relieves stomach pains. When the sugar is deleted from the above recipe, and one cup is drunk hot in the morning for three consecutive days, the appetite of the individual in question will increase.

Tanchi (Caparia biflora)L. Boil the leaves of this plant in water until a syrup-like liquid is formed. Cool the liquid and drink for the relief from colds and for the general cooling of body temperature. When the roots of this plant were sheathed and washed and mashed and then boiled, in one pint of water, the solution obtained relieves sore throats.

Follo de lele (Randi aculeata)L. When the washed leaves of this plant are applied to the forehead and temples it relieves headaches. When the inside of the leaf is applied to the forehead and not changed, it will break a fever. When there is a pain in

any part of the body, and these leaves are soaked in cocoanut oil then tied to that area, the pain will cease.

Tuturutu (Caesalpinia pulcherrima)L. The people of the British islands use this plant for cooling off the body when the leaves are boiled and the formed tea is drunk. When the small branches of the tree are boiled, and the liquid is drunk, the liquid obtained relieves colds. These two preparations also clear up pimples.

Tebinki (Pectis febrifuga) van Hall Boil the leaves of this plant in water. Add boiling cocoanut oil to this solution. This preparation provides relief from colds, fever, and thick blood. To relieve fever, this solution should be drunk at night only, and only when it is hot. When boiling water is poured over the entire plant, and the liquid is drunk cold, it will flush out the entire body, and will relieve any urinary or intestinal infection.

Mata comblais (Lithophila muscoides)L. When this plant is boiled in water, the syrup obtained is used to relieve a pain in the womb of a woman or the testicles of a man. When anise, nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon, orange peel and sweet pepper are added to the syrup, it will act as a laxative.

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Bosora prato -- When this plant is boiled in water, and one cup is drunk in the morning and the evening, it will relieve menstrual cramps. This plant has two different types of leaves: a long narrow leaf which is used in the above preparation, and a short wide leaf which has no medicinal use.

Walishali (Crotons flavens)L. When the leaves of this plant

are rolled up and one is placed in each nostril, a stuffed nose is relieved. This is because the velvety hairs on the leaves appear to sensitize the nose, which causes you to sneeze. The leaves appear in two colors: green and yellowish-red. When a twig of green leaves is cut off and tied onto a bruise once a day, the bruise becomes healed. When the green leaves are boiled in water, the tea formed relieves stomach cramps. It also relieves all gases present in the body. When the green leaves are added to a sink of dirty dishes, it leaves the dishes smelling sweet. When twigs of the green leaves are dragged across the floor, it kills all lice and ticks present. When seven yellowish-red leaves are boiled in one cup of water and the liquid is drunk three days before the beginning of the menstrual cycle, and for three days after bleeding has ceased, it is said that the woman will not have any menstrual cramps for the remainder of her life.

Root of ~~any~~oe (Tribulus terrestris)L. When the yellow flower is washed seven times and steeped in boiling water, and three teaspoons of the resultant potent is given to a baby, it relieves teething pains.

Yerba de mach de ligna -- When a tea is made from this plant, it relieves teething pains of a baby.

Rom brod -- When three drops of aloe oil, one cup of water and cinnamon are added to the ground up rom brod leaves, the resultant dough should be placed in a wet, cool cloth and tied on the back with three strings to relieve a backache.

Kwihi -- When the new, top leaves of a kwihi tree are mashed and boiled, the resultant water is patted on the eye to relieve eyeaches. When you feel a cold or a cough coming on, the mashed kwihi leaves are added to a raw egg and the liquid

is drunk. When the white bark of the kwihi tree is immersed in white rum, and then wrapped around a sprained wrist or ankle, it is said that the bark will draw out the pain. This same preparation holds true for dislocations. ?

Pita (Agave boldinghiana) Trel. When the arm of this plant, which leads to the bud of the plant is cut off and placed in charcoal for two weeks, the result is a sweet candy which is fragrant and tasty but will decrease the appetite of the eater.

Altemeta--When this plant is boiled in water, it relieves *how?* a child's fever and a baby's teething pains. "Superstitious" people use it to wash their houses because they believe it brings good luck and scares away the devil.

Yerba de seroe --When the plant is boiled, the liquid obtained is good for the relief from colds, coughs, and the reduction of a fever. Sugar may be added to this preparation to make it more palatable.

Yerba de luisa -- When the purple flower of this plant is boiled, the solution obtained will flush out the body and will lower body temperature. It can also be used to clean the house.

Cocolodi -- Boiling water is poured over five leaves of this plant and one teaspoon is given to a baby with yellow eyes (this is described as a symptom of gall bladder trouble) five to six times a day for three consecutive days. This will relieve this condition within one week.

Cocorabano -- Wash the leaves of this plant seven times. Pour boiling water over these leaves. The liquid obtained may be used to clean wounds, and to relieve the pains caused from rheumatism, when the preparation is patted on. When drunk, it will relieve high blood pressure, and hangovers.

Mach de lens -- Pour boiling water over the pure white flowers of this plant. The liquid obtained will prevent a diabetic situation from getting worse.

Yerba de plata -- When this plant is boiled for a long period of time, and the liquid obtained is drunk hot at night only, it will relieve coughs caused by influenza or the grip. Sugar may be added to this preparation to make it more palatable.

Follo de amisema -- Boil the leaves of this plant in one cup of water at night only. This preparation will make you sleep comfortably if you have any heart trouble.

Pasopa -- Boil the leaves of this plant in water, cool, and drink as the first thing in the morning for nine consecutive days. This preparation will eliminate worms which appear on a child's skin.

Sinablah -- This plant should be boiled at night and left outside to cool. Give children one cup of this solution to make a burn heal. When dried leaves are put in a small amount of water and boiling water is poured over this solution, the resultant preparation may be used as a laxative. However, if the woman is pregnant when she takes this preparation, it will induce a miscarriage.

Marie pompoon (Stephanotis floribunda)L. -- Use the stem of this plant to take the pulp out of the fruit. Pour boiling water over the pulp and give the solution to babies all day to relieve their vomiting and teething pains.

Palvo shimaron -- Scrape the root of this plant clean and wash it seven times. Boil it in water until the solution obtained is one half the volume of the water added.. Drink this

solution for nine days after pregnancy to clean out the system. It is claimed that if the root of this plant is washed, boiled and strained as described above, and if addition nutmeg, cinnamon and rhubarb are placed in the solution it will "cure" breast cancer. When the oil of this root is placed on either an old cut or a new cut, it will facilitate healing.

Mango plant (Mangifera indica)L. -- When five leaves of this plant are boiled, the tea obtained relieves high blood pressure.

Yerba de leche (Euphorbia adenoptera)L. To relieve the symptoms of a diabetic and to prevent his condition from getting worse, this plant should be boiled with sugar for ten minutes. One cup should be given every day.

Yerba de hole - Mash the leaves of this plant with sugar and rub the entire mouth of a child with white spots on her gums with it three times a day. Take seven of these leaves with a small amount of sugar and boil the solution for seven minutes. This will relieve a child's wretching..

Yerba buano -- Pour boiled water over the leaves of this plant and drink the resultant solution all day long until vomiting ceases.

Sena (Krameria ixina)L. -- When the leaves of this plant are boiled, the resultant preparation is used for a laxative.

Black sage (Latana camara)L. When the leaves of this plant are boiled the resultant preparation is used for a laxative. When the leaves of Sena are boiled with those of the black sage, the tea formed will induce a miscarriage if drunk in the morning

and once in the evening for nine consecutive days.

Wareru (Cissus siovoides)L. -- The leaf of this plant may be wound around a wound (cut) to clean out the infection. When this plant is boiled for a long period of time and is given to a woman after she has given birth it will cleanse her system. If this same liquid is drunk during the first two months of pregnancy, it will induce a miscarriage.

Pega pega (Mentzelia aspera)L. - When this plant is boiled with wareru in one gallon of water in the presence of rhubarb, and the solution is boiled until its volume is approximately one half pint, the solution, which is in the form of a tea, is used for the relief of menstrual cramps and stomach cramps. Small quantities of anise and nutmeg may be added.

Mamparito (Porophyllum macrocephalum)P.Dc. This plant when boiled will relieve a baby's crying when he is about one month old. It may be given in any quantity at anytime.

Scorbano -- Boil this plant and drink the liquid obtained all day long to relieve stomach cramps.

Divi divi (Caesalpinia coriaria)L. Chew on the bud of the flower to relieve tooth aches.

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INFORMANTS

Selwyn Spanner - male - age 35 - occupation insurance salesman.

Mr. Spanner gave me background information, as well as information about the basic uses of some plants. He also acted as my interpreter for my first two interviews.

Mrs. Papes and son - female -, age 65- occupation - none

- male -, age 36- occupation - gov't laborer.

Mrs. Papes and son gave me information pertaining to only their personal use of three plants and four trees growing around their house which is in the Wec-Fontein are of the island.

Bernard Stamper - male - age 78 - occupation - ex-contractor for gov't

My interview with Mr.. Stamper was hampered by the following:

(a) he didn't understand my questions because of a hearing difficulty and (b) he thought I was Aruban and I was a government inspector in disguise. Therefore, I did not get all the information I could from him. Mr. Stamper lives in Rooi Master - a suburb of San Nicolaas.

Melanie Paesch - female - age 71- occupation - none.

My interview with Mrs. Paesch and her daughter (on two separate occasions yielded a great deal of information about her uses of plants and trees. Her house is in Tamarijn, a villiage in the center of the island, and people from Tamarijn, PedraPlat and Paradera came to visit her for her preparations. She is not a curioso, but does pick up some coney by mixing up her brews.. This interview was hampered by the fact that she had long stories for every preparation, which were not related to what she was telling me.

Mrs. Van der Biezen - female - age 53 - occupation homemaker.

Mrs. Van der Biezen has eleven children and therefore has no money for medical expences even though she lives four blocks from the San Pedro Hospital in Oranjestad. Therefore, she uses the folk medicine which she learned from her mother to cure any illnesses her children may have contracted.

Mrs. Wijngaarde - female - age 69 - occupation none

Mr. Wijngaarde was born on Aruba of Aruban parents, but lived the major part of her life on Curacao. From her I was told that the folk medicine on the two islands, if it was not exactly the same, the differences were very minute. Basically she did not give me any new information - but correlated the uses of the plants which I had already received. Mrs. Wijngaarde lives in Hooiberg, a village in the southern center of the island.

Regenia Raas - female age 73 - occupation - none

Mrs. Raas and her sister age 68, were my most valuable informants. I was taken around her kunuku and she described all of the plants and trees she had and their uses. She was a most eager informant and referred me to Mrs. Paesch, and to Mrs. Van der Biezen. She attempted, although unsuccessfully to set up an interview with Mamona, the foremost curio on Aruba. Mamona, however, refused to see or talk to me because I was not Aruban.

Mrs. Joan Coronel - Female age (approx) 30 occupation - ex- gov't social worker.

I met Joan through the Reverend Van Den Doel. She worked with me from the start, and after an interview, would review with me the information I received. This proved very helpful for an interviewer as inexperienced as I was and still am. Not only did Joan interpret for me, but frequently she set up appointments for me with old women who she knew from her job as a social worker..

NOTE: The list of my informants which appears above, is only a partial list comprising only my most important informants, who provided the bulk of the information for this paper.